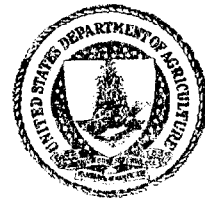




U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Office of the Secretary
Press Service



Release - Immediate.

December 14, 1925.

MANY SHOREBIRDS ARE
OF ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE

Certain species of shorebirds which live on marshes or near large bodies of salt or fresh water--phalaropes of three species, avocets, and stilts--have considerable economic importance although they are almost unknown to many persons familiar with bird life in thickly populated districts. For the information of conservationists, sportsmen, and others interested in shorebirds, there has been issued recently by the United States Department of Agriculture a Department Bulletin, No. 1359, Food of American Phalaropes, Avocets, and Stilts, by Alexander Wetmore, formerly assistant biologist of the Bureau of Biological and Survey, /now assistant secretary of the Smithsonian Institution.

The examination of the stomach contents of many of these birds proves that all of them have commendable food habits and no marked injurious traits. The phalaropes, small, close-feathered, snipe-like birds that swim on the water like tiny ducks, are too slight in body to be killed for their flesh; avocets and stilts, though larger, do not produce meat of a quality suitable for table use. All these birds are tame and fearless, so that there is little sport in hunting them. In addition to possessing habits of the greatest interest, it is found that the phalaropes, avocets, and stilts destroy many larval forms of insect pests, as mosquitoes and

horseflies. Stilts eat billbugs and other weevils, as well as crawfish and giant water bugs, all of which are destructive. The avocet shares with the stilt a taste for weevils, including forms that are injurious.

Because of their specialized habits, these birds have suffered a considerable reduction in numbers from man's encroachment upon their haunts. All are fully protected by law, but the drainage of swamps and marshes has decreased the areas available to them as breeding and feeding grounds, and many have been destroyed by gunners. With the well-merited protection accorded them at present, these birds may be expected to hold their own and increase where conditions are favorable.

Those interested in the bulletin may obtain it while the supply lasts by addressing the United States Department of Agriculture at Washington, D. C.

#